

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A method for competitive bidding by print
- 2 information product vendors comprising steps of:
- 3 inputting a plurality of vendor records into a
- 4 storage of a general purpose computer, each of said
- 5 vendor records having a data field identifying a print
- 6 information product vendor and a buyer identification
- 7 data field identifying a buyer that said vendor is
- 8 associated with;
- 9 inputting a buyer's invitation-for-bid data into
- 10 said general purpose computer, said buyer's invitation-
- 11 for-bid data having a buyer identification data, and
- 12 having an invitation for bid on a print information
- 13 product job from said buyer;
- 14 identifying at least one vendor record as qualified,
- 15 based on a match of said buyer identification data and
- 16 the buyer identification data field of said at least one
- 17 vendor record;
- 18 transmitting a vendor's invitation-for-bid data to
- 19 said at least one vendor;
- 20 inputting into said general purpose computer a
- 21 plurality of bid data, each from one of said plurality of
- 22 vendors to which said vendor's invitation-for-bid data
- 23 was transmitted, each of said bid data representing a bid
- 24 price;
- 25 identifying a bid data from said received bid data
- 26 having the lowest represented bid price;
- 27 outputting a selected vendor data representing the
- 28 identity of the vendor corresponding to the bid data
- 29 identified by said identifying step; and

30 transmitting an order to the vendor represented by
31 said selected vendor data.

1 2. A method according to claim 1 further comprising a
2 step of:
3 inserting a vendor capability data into at least one
4 of said vendor records, said vendor capability data
5 representing a set of vendor manufacturing capabilities
6 of the print information product vendor identified by
7 said record;
8 calculating a vendor requirement data from said
9 buyer's invitation-for-bid data, said vendor requirement
10 data representing a set vendor manufacturing capabilities
11 required for performing said print information product
12 job; and
13 comparing said vendor requirement data to the print
14 information product records associated with the buyer
15 from which said buyer's information-for-bid was received,
16 wherein said step of identifying at least one vendor
17 record as qualified is based on said comparing and said
18 match of said buyer identification data and the data
19 field of said at least one vendor record identifying a
20 buyer that said vendor is associated.

1 3. A method according to claim 1 further comprising
2 steps of:
3 ranking said received bid data according to said
4 represented bid price; and
5 transmitting an information data from said general
6 purpose computer to other vendors identifying said
7 selected vendor and the rank order value of said received
8 bid data.

1 4. A method according to claim 2 further comprising
2 steps of:
3 ranking said received bid data according to said
4 represented bid price; and
5 transmitting an information data from said general
6 purpose computer to other vendors identifying said
7 selected vendor and the rank order value of said received
8 bid data.

1 5. A method according to claim 2, wherein said vendor
2 capability data represents the identified vendor's
3 capability to manufacture each of a plurality of
4 different types of print information products.

1 6. A method according to claim 2, further comprising
2 steps of:
3 transmitting a request for vendor capability data to
4 said at least one vendor associated with at least one of
5 said buyers;
6 receiving a first formatted vendor capability data
7 from said at least one vendor; and
8 converting said first formatted vendor capability
9 data into said vendor capability data,
10 wherein said step of inputting a vendor capability
11 data inputs said converted data.

1 7. A method according to claim 2 wherein said vendor
2 capability data input for each of a plurality of printing
3 vendors represents a set of vendor capabilities relating
4 to objective and subjective parameters for each of a
5 plurality of types of print information products.

1 8. A method according to claim 1, further comprising
2 steps of:
3 inputting into said central data server a completion
4 of job data;
5 transmitting from said central data server to said
6 buyer an invoice for payment of said bid price;
7 inputting a payment from said buyer into an escrow
8 account via electronic fund transfer;
9 subtracting a system access fee data and a licensing
10 fee data from a data representing said payment deposited
11 into said escrow account to generate a remainder payment
12 data; and
13 transferring a payment from said escrow account to
14 an account of said vendor corresponding to said remainder
15 payment data.

1 9. A method according to claim 2, further comprising
2 steps of:
3 inputting into said central data server a completion
4 of job data;
5 transmitting from said central data server to said
6 buyer an invoice for payment of said bid price;
7 inputting a payment from said buyer into an escrow
8 account via electronic fund transfer;
9 subtracting a system access fee data and a licensing
10 fee data from a data representing said payment deposited
11 into said escrow account to generate a remainder payment
12 data; and
13 transferring a payment from said escrow account to
14 an account of said vendor corresponding to said remainder
15 payment data.

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2 10. A method according to claim 1, further comprising a
3 step of:
4 calculating a job milestone data based on said
5 buyer's invitation-for-bid data.

1 11. A method according to claim 10 further comprising
2 steps of:
3 generating a job progress verification request based
4 on said job milestone data; and
5 entering a data into said central data server
6 representing a job progress corresponding to said job
7 progress verification request.

1 12. A method according to claim 2, further comprising a
2 step of:
3 calculating a job milestone data based on said
4 buyer's invitation-for-bid data.

1 13. A method according to claim 12 further comprising
2 steps of:
3 generating a job progress verification request based
4 on said job milestone data; and
5 entering a data into said central data server
6 representing a job progress corresponding to said job
7 progress verification request.

1 14. A system for competitive bidding by print information
2 product vendors comprising:
3 means for inputting a plurality of vendor records
4 into a storage of a general purpose computer, each of
5 said vendor records having a data field identifying a

6 print information product vendor and a buyer
7 identification data field identifying a buyer that said
8 vendor is associated with;
9 means for inputting a buyer's invitation-for-bid
10 data into said general purpose computer, said buyer's
11 invitation-for-bid data having a buyer identification
12 data, and having an invitation for bid on a print
13 information product job from said buyer;
14 means for identifying at least one vendor record as
15 qualified, based on a match of said buyer identification
16 data and the buyer identification data field of said at
17 least one vendor record;
18 means for transmitting a vendor's invitation-for-bid
19 data to said at least one vendors;
20 means for inputting into said general purpose
21 computer a plurality of bid data, each from one of said
22 plurality of vendors to which said vendor's invitation-
23 for-bid data was transmitted, each of said bid data
24 representing a bid price;
25 means for identifying a bid data from said received
26 bid data having the lowest represented bid price;
27 means for outputting a selected vendor data
28 representing the identity of the vendor corresponding to
29 the bid data identified by said identifying means; and
30 means for transmitting an order to the vendor
31 represented by said selected vendor data.

1 15. A system according to claim 14 further comprising:
2 means for inserting a vendor capability data into at
3 least one of said vendor records, said vendor capability
4 data representing a set of vendor manufacturing

5 capabilities of the print information product vendor
6 identified by said record;
7 means for calculating a vendor requirement data from
8 said buyer's invitation-for-bid data, said vendor
9 requirement data representing a set vendor manufacturing
10 capabilities required for performing said print
11 information product job; and
12 means for comparing said vendor requirement data to
13 the print information product records associated with the
14 buyer from which said buyer's information-for-bid was
15 received,
16 wherein said means for identifying at least one
17 vendor record as qualified performs said identifying
18 based on a result of said comparing means and a match of
19 said buyer identification data and the buyer
20 identification data field of said at least one vendor
21 record.